



Fact Sheet: Protecting, Improving, and Restoring Our Wetlands

President Bush Is Expanding on His Recently Accomplished 2004 Goal for Wetlands Conservation

Today, President Bush Reiterated His Strong Commitment To Wetlands Conservation To The White House Conference On North American Wildlife Policy In Reno, Nevada, Where The Vice President Reviewed The Progress President Bush And His Administration Have Made On Wildlife Conservation Over The Past Seven Years. Due to economic events in this week, President Bush remained in Washington, D.C. Vice President Cheney attended the conference in his place. The Conference, convened by the White House Council on Environmental Quality, brought together hundreds of leaders within the wildlife community. In August 2007, the President signed Executive Order 13443 to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat.

- **The Vice President discussed efforts to restore, improve, and protect at least four million additional acres of wetlands over the next five years.** This builds on the Administration's achievement of the President's original goal of protecting, improving, and restoring three million acres of interior and coastal wetlands. The Administration exceeded the initial goal by more than 600,000 acres -- and did so one year earlier than predicted.
- **To meet the new goal, the Vice President announced incentives to increase participation and support of wetlands conservation.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture will provide \$204 million over ten years in new payments to encourage conservation practices in the Conservation Reserve Program. The new financing will include a Signing Incentive Program of up to \$100 per acre, a Practice Incentive Payment of 40 percent of the initial cost, and an increase in rental rates by 20 percent for the Floodplain Wetlands Restoration practice, the Non-Floodplain Wetlands Restoration practice, the Bottomland Hardwood Forests practice, and Duck Nesting Habitat.

To Meet The New Goal, Federal Agencies Will Focus On Improving The Quality Of Wetlands In Four Areas:

- 1) Mississippi River Basin:** Wetlands in this area retain nitrates and phosphates that would otherwise drain from adjacent farmlands. Recycling these nutrients through conservation practices such as drainage water management systems with wetlands will help reduce the size of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico and provide habitat, flood protection, and clean drinking water.
- 2) Gulf Coast:** Marshlands along coasts effectively reduce storm surges. These wetlands can be enhanced by redirecting freshwater and sediments of the Mississippi River onto the near-shore. By moderating storm surges, these wetlands will help protect New Orleans and other coastal cities.
- 3) Great Lakes:** Wetlands bordering the lakes protect water quality. Federal agencies will coordinate efforts to conserve 100,000 acres of wetlands in the basin (both coastal and inland), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will report the resulting improvement in water

quality through reduced nutrients and sediment. Great Lakes States have also committed to restoring or protecting 100,000 acres of wetlands.

4) Prairie Pothole Region: This upper Midwestern area of the Dakotas and Minnesota support most of the duck nesting habitat in North America. Conserving the shallow ponds called "prairie potholes" in this region will protect the potholes themselves and nearby uplands where ducks build their nests.

Agencies Will Take Measures To Ensure Progress Is Being Made.

1) National Wetland Condition Assessment: This first-ever national assessment of wetland condition for wetlands across America, led by the EPA and conducted in partnership with the Department of the Interior, will be delivered in 2013.

2) Conservation Effects Assessment Project: Led by the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the report will complete assessments on the Prairie Pothole Region, Mississippi Alluvial Valley, the High Plains, California Central Valley - Upper Klamath River Basin, and the Mid-Atlantic Rolling Coastal Plain - Coastal Flats by 2011.

3) Status and Trends Report: The report by the Fish and Wildlife Service will tally acres of 11 wetland habitats and four deepwater habitats by 2010.

The primarily Federal programs accomplishing these results include the Wetlands Reserve Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, National Wildlife Refuge Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Technical Assistance Program, Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection, and Restoration Projects, the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan-Joint Ventures, and the National Estuary Program.

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